
Selecting a Business Coach

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This article discusses the importance of business coaches and how to select them.

Main Points in this article:

- 1 Coaching is focused on defining clear goals and setting specific time frames to achieve them.**
- 2 Improving personal performance is a continuous process, and research indicates that coaching will accelerate personal development.**
- 3 Coaching is about changing behaviour for better performance.**
- 4 As a person grows, their development needs will change, along with their coaching requirements.**
- 5 Professional one-on-one coaching is a very powerful management tool.**

Coaching can be a very effective way to improve your personal performance.

It helps you to understand where you are, where you want to be, and what additional development is required to achieve your performance goals.

It has been said many times “it’s lonely at the top”. Entrepreneurs or CEO’s sometimes need to make pivotal decisions relating to the direction of their businesses.

Who can they talk to when exploring new ideas, developing strategy, or changing the business model? Other types of decisions may arise in respect of capital raising, acquisitions or dealing with a major crisis.

Having a trusted person to talk to, and who is prepared to give you open and direct advice, may mean the difference between success and failure.

Improving personal performance is a continuous process, and research indicates that coaching will accelerate personal development.

An Accenture report titled “The Role of the CEO” (October 2002) indicated that 46% of the most senior executives, and 47% of other executives/managers have a mentor or role model.

The words “coach” or “mentor” are sometimes interchanged. Is there a difference, or is coaching just another word for mentoring?

A review of the literature suggests that mentoring is a long term personal relationship, while coaching is based on mutual agreement.

Coaching is focused on defining clear goals and setting specific time frames to achieve them.

Coaching is a way of contributing to another person’s professional development by guiding them towards their goals. By sharing experiences and inspiring them, the coach is seeking to maximise their career potential.

Failure is also part of the process. When mistakes occur it is important for the coach to be both constructive and supportive.

Coaching from Different Perspectives

Whether you are the coach or the person being coached, a set of expectations needs to be established.

From the coach’s perspective, the expectation is for the person who is being coached to be:

- Accepting of honest feedback and criticism
- Committed and enthusiastic
- Prepared to push themselves to achieve their goals, and
- Mutually share their business and development experiences.

From the other perspective, the coach is expected to provide:

- ❑ Valuable and neutral assessments
- ❑ Strong values, around honesty and integrity
- ❑ Commitment to help, and
- ❑ Direction in relation to both short and long term goals for growth.

It should be very clear upfront that the coach is not there to run the business. That role clearly rests with the entrepreneur or CEO.

Before Looking for a Coach

Before approaching a coach, the entrepreneur or CEO needs to fully understand their own skills and capabilities. The next step is to make a list of the skills and experience needed to compliment their own. What does the coach need to bring to the table?

As the person grows, their development needs will change, along with their coaching requirements.

Choosing a Coach

When choosing a coach, the following areas need to be considered:

- ❑ **Chemistry.** Is the chemistry right? Do you like this person and can you relate to them? Coaching requires respect and a good strong professional relationship between the parties for it to work.
- ❑ **Experience.** Does the coach have experience in a range of areas? Does the coach need to have specific industry experience? Sometimes coaches with different industry experience come up with

breakthrough ideas. This is because they are less likely to have preconceived notions about the industry. Coaching is also a two way process. When the parties stop learning from each other it is time to end the relationship.

- ❑ **Trust.** Is the coach trustworthy, loyal and honest? These qualities are essential to preserve the confidentiality of discussions. Similar values will provide a strong basis for an ongoing relationship.
- ❑ **Unbiased advice.** Can the coach provide valuable unbiased and open advice? Coaching is an ongoing development process where some issues may take time to be resolved.
- ❑ **Commitment.** Does the coach have a strong commitment to your career development? Is he/she committed to clear goals? Will the coach work on both short term and long term goals for growth?
- ❑ **Assessment.** Will the coach provide continual feedback and assess your progress towards the agreed goals? The relationship will flounder if the parties are not committed to clear and achievable goals. Will the coach push your development to achieve these goals?
- ❑ **Listening.** Is the coach a good listener? Does he/she understand the issues?
- ❑ **Risk.** Will the coach encourage you to step outside your comfort zone and take calculated risks? Coaching is about changing behaviour for better performance.

Professional one-on-one coaching is a very powerful management tool.

Entrepreneurs and CEO's can benefit from exchanging ideas and accessing different skills.

It can encourage strong performance improvement or it can provide a valuable life support system in times of crisis. This level of experienced support may turn a crisis event into a powerful growth experience.

Choosing the right coach can be a very rewarding experience.

It allows you to move ahead far quicker than you would perhaps move by yourself.

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